

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1-83 (canceled)

Claim 84 (new): A method of stabilizing or improving the health-related quality of life in a human individual with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), comprising the steps of:

- (a) administering to the individual a composition comprising a dsDNA epitope which specifically binds to an anti-dsDNA antibody;
- (b) assessing level of circulating anti-ds-DNA antibodies in the individual;
- (c) identifying the individual as suitable for continued treatment for stabilizing or improving the health-related quality of life if the level of sustained reduction of anti-ds-DNA antibody level is at least about 10% for at least about one month; and
- (d) continuing to treat the individual only if the individual has the sustained reduction of antibody level.

Claim 85 (new): The method of claim 84, wherein the stabilization or improvement of health-related quality of life is a stabilization or improvement in one or more aspects of health-related quality of life selected from the group consisting of limitations in physical activities because of health problems, limitations in social functioning because of physical or emotional problems, limitations in work or other usual activities because of physical health problems, bodily pain, general mental health, limitations in work or other usual activities because of emotional problems, vitality, and general health perception.

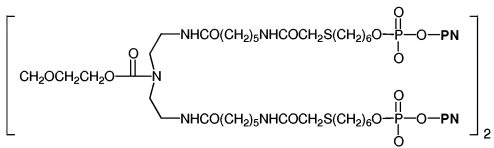
Claim 86 (new): The method of claim 84, wherein the dsDNA epitope comprises a double-stranded polynucleotide 5'-TGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTG-3' (SEQ ID NO:1) in combination with its complementary strand, or one of the single-stranded polynucleotides 5'-

TGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTG-3' (SEQ ID NO:1) or 5'-CACACACACACACACACA-3' (SEQ ID NO:2).

Claim 87 (new): The method of claim 86, wherein the dsDNA epitope is administered in the form of a conjugate comprising (a) a non-immunogenic valency platform molecule and (b) two or more double-stranded DNA (dsDNA) epitopes that specifically bind to an anti-dsDNA antibody from the individual.

Claim 88 (new): The method of claim 84, wherein the dsDNA epitope is administered in the form of a conjugate comprising (a) a non-immunogenic valency platform molecule and (b) two or more double-stranded DNA (dsDNA) epitopes that specifically bind to an anti-dsDNA antibody from the individual.

Claim 89 (new): The method of claim 88, wherein the conjugate is a compound of the formula



wherein PN is $(\text{CA})_{10} \bullet (\text{TG})_{10}$ ((SEQ ID NO:2)•(SEQ ID NO:1)).

Claim 90 (new): The method of claim 84, which is a method of improving the health-related quality of life of an individual with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), wherein the administration of the dsDNA epitope results in an improvement in the individual's health-related quality of life.

Claim 91 (new): The method of claim 84, wherein the dsDNA epitope is administered to the individual for a period of more than about 16 weeks.

Claim 92 (new): The method of claim 84 or 89, wherein the sustained reduction is at least about 20% below baseline.

Claim 93 (new): The method of claim 92, wherein the sustained reduction is at least about 30% below baseline.

Claim 94 (new): The method of claim 84 or 89, wherein the sustained reduction is maintained for more than about 16 weeks.

Claim 95 (new): The method of claim 94, wherein the sustained reduction is maintained for more than about 24 weeks.

Claim 96 (new): The method of claim 95, wherein the sustained reduction is maintained for at least about 1 year.

Claim 97 (new): The method of claim 85, wherein the stabilization or improvement in the individual's health-related quality of life is detectable by the Medical Outcome Survey Short Form 36 (SF-36).

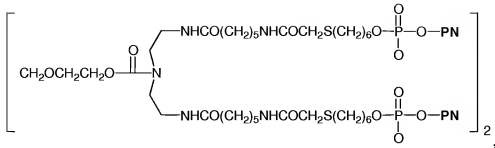
Claim 98 (new): The method of claim 91, wherein the effective amount of the dsDNA epitope is administered to the individual for a period of more than about 24 weeks.

Claim 99 (new): A method of stabilizing or improving the health-related quality of life of a human individual with SLE comprising the steps of:

(a) administering to the individual an amount of a dsDNA epitope effective to stabilize or improve the health-related quality of life of the individual,

wherein administration of the dsDNA epitope results in a sustained reduction in the level of circulating anti-dsDNA antibodies in the individual of at least 10% that is maintained for at least about one month, and

wherein the dsDNA epitope is administered in the form of a conjugate of the formula



wherein PN is (CA)₁₀•(TG)₁₀ ((SEQ ID NO:2)•(SEQ ID NO:1));

- (b) assessing level of circulating anti-ds-DNA antibodies in the individual;
- (c) identifying the individual as suitable for continued treatment for stabilizing or improving the health-related quality of life if the level of sustained reduction of anti-ds-DNA antibody level is at least about 10% for at least about one month; and
- (d) continuing to treat the individual only if the individual has the sustained reduction of antibody level.

Claim 100 (new): The method of claim 99, wherein the sustained reduction is at least about 20% below baseline.

Claim 101 (new): The method of claim 100, wherein the sustained reduction is at least about 30% below baseline.

Claim 102 (new): The method of claim 99, wherein the sustained reduction is maintained for more than about 16 weeks.

Claim 103 (new): The method of claim 102, wherein the sustained reduction is maintained for more than about 24 weeks.

Claim 104 (new): The method of claim 103, wherein the sustained reduction is maintained for at least about 1 year.